

WASHINGTON (December 29) – Congressman Spencer Bachus (AL-6) today announced major fire grants for the Helena Fire Department in Shelby County and the Margaret Fire and Rescue Service in St. Clair County.

The departments will receive grants from the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) program operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The program is designed to help volunteer, combination, and career departments recruit and retain firefighters in rapidly-growing areas.

“Our fire departments are at the heart of their communities. It is critical for the protection of citizens, as well as the safety of firefighters, that they have the personnel and resources to do their job well. This news is a great way to start a new year,” Bachus said.

Bachus announced the following grants.

Helena Fire Department - \$566,370

SAFER grant to allow the department to recall 12 part-time firefighters

Chief John Wilder said, “We are humbled and thankful to receive this grant. It will allow 12 firefighters who were laid off due to poor economic conditions to return to work. We thank Congressman Bachus for his support during these challenging times and it is this spirit of cooperation that has helped make Helena one of the top 100 communities in the country.”

Mayor Sonny Penhale said, “This grant will benefit the safety and well-being of the citizens of Helena. The combination of very significant growth in recent years along with tough economic times means this grant could not come at a better time. We appreciate Congressman Bachus and thank him for always keeping Helena in his mind and heart.”

Margaret Fire and Rescue Service - \$374,752

▯ *SAFER grant to allow the department to hire four full-time firefighters*

Chief Tom Dixon said, “This is good news for the community. We will use the grant to staff four full-time firefighters. This comes at a time when many communities are hurting and cutting basic services. We have had cutbacks ourselves, so it is great to be able to add these firefighters and we appreciate this news from Congressman Bachus.”

The goal of the SAFER grant program is to improve the ability of fire departments to attain and maintain 24-hour staffing and to assure that their communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. The program is administered by the Department of Homeland Security.